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Jaargang 9 NO. 49

ICI, SILENCE

by Elena Filipovic

BRUSSELS, 17 OCT. – First there is silence. Then a piercing cry, cut off abruptly. And then another, cut off as well. A bright, almost blinding white. Then black. More silence.

Like the epigraph to an essay, the twin operatic screams at the beginning of *Resonating Surfaces* (2005) announce something to come.

Nearly one minute of black quiet follows. It isolates the epigraph from the rest. Just before you imagine that this stillness is too long, a camera pans and its slow, undulant

movements show you a city. A text tells you: Ici, São Paolo.

All white-grey concrete, a modern metropolis slowly passes before you. It is a dense forest of buildings with small patches of lushness, of green. As far as the camera can see, there are ordered grids of windows on the buildings. It looks like a city unpopulated empty. Nothing seems to move.

The scene changes. Cut to people. They are swaying to a sound only they hear, singing and perhaps beating drums or other instruments. Music and singing can be heard, but it doesn't correspond to the movements of the mouths you see. Cut to other

people. A father and son and mother, their hands caressing the other's face and shoulder and hand as they speak or listen. These are absent-minded caresses, a mix of tenderness and habit.

Voice-overs in Portuguese can be heard, evoking remembrances of São Paolo. They speak of a longing for ordinary things: the city's smell of petrol and jasmine, fog in the winter, asphalt, the sound of the gas delivery van...

The relationship between the movements of musicians, the caresses of a Brazilian family and recalled sensations of a missed home—nothing connects these except the inexplica-

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(advertentie)

Première 2/11 21h

MANON DE BOER

RESONATING SURFACES

Flagey Studio 5 Heilig Kruisplein 1050 Brussel Pl. Sainte-Croix 1050 Bruxelles

Current of buildings with small notabox of — It looks like a site unnominated small state it is a site unnominated small state in the state it is a site unnominated small state in the site unnominated small state unnominated small small state unnominated small small state unnominated small state unnominated small state unnominated small state unnominated small smal

ble way sounds, bodies, and memories can conjure São Paolo, constituting the city that we otherwise see devoid of such people or sensation. So ends the second epigraph.

The scene changes. Back to the city. More undulating views of the concrete and its regular grids of empty windows.

A text announces: Voix, Suely Rolnik.

There could be no way more apt than this to announce the interviewee, whose voice dominates the film while her screen presence remains elusive, fleeting. The Brazilian psychoanalyst, translator, and writer appears several times—speaking, reading, listening, letting the camera film her—but you never see her speaking the words you hear. Often, you will not see her at all while her voice is heard. Voice, Suely Rolnik.

Her voice-over recounts the story of her years as a young activist in Brazil, her imprisonment, her arrival in Paris, her psychoanalysis with Guattari, her love affair with Deleuze, the way a song prompted her to her return to Brazil, in short, her maturation into the woman that one sees fleetingly on film. While she speaks, images of the two cities float by. Here, São Paolo. There, Paris.

Rolnik speaks of the body as a *plaque sensible*, the word used to describe the sensitized photographic plates of early photography. It is a metaphor for the body as a surface on which experience is recorded, and



Manon de Boer Resonating Surfaces, 2005 (film still)

upon which time and history are written. Histories of colonialization and oppression have shaped the bodies in Brazil, she explains. These histories have also fashioned the means through which those bodies can resist. She speaks of the way a scream—the vibrations of vocal cords reaching their limit point—can also be a

form of resistance. Deleuze taught her this by asking her to study two operatic screams.

However structurally different the two are, one can't help think of *Sylvia Kristel – Paris* (2003), Manon de Boer's filmic portrait of the 1970s screen actress famous for incarnating Emmanuelle in the eponymous French film and its sequels. In that film,

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Kristel told of her arrival in Paris, her beginnings as an actress, her love affairs, in short, her maturation into the woman one sees briefly on film. And then she told her story again, the same one but slightly differently. The voice you heard never corresponded to the image on film. While she spoke, images of Paris floated by.

The two films are equally draped in an atmosphere of atemporal nostalgia. This is not so much because the slightly faded palette of Super 8 in one or 16 mm film in the other looks like it has filmed a time clearly different than ours, but rather because it doesn't reveal its time. It withholds time as it registers it on its plaque sensible. No small part of this lies in the fact that the cities shown—the São Paolo and Paris of Rolnik or the Paris of Kristel-seem strangely halted and vacant. The camera hypnotically floats over each city, showing its buildings, its urban fabric, and returning again and again to certain spots, like a lover. Or a detective. But there are almost no signs of when the film was made and it could have been yesterday or fifteen years ago.

While they are both undeniably portraits of the women they feature (and the cities they evoke), these are hardly biographies in the strict sense. Of course, their stories are personal, even highly autobiographical, recounting a series of crucial, formative

moments in their respective lives. But the true story in each is not Rolnik's or Kristel's so much as an aesthetic, almost epistemological one: de Boer's focus is on the place where memory and its retelling conveys something about a person that isn't located in the actual words they speak but in those they don't, in how they tell them, or in the gaps in between—in the way memory fails, reconstructs, or interprets history.

Silence is crucial to this and so much of what de Boer's does. Her works are impregnated with bits of silence (and with it, elisions, gaps, and absences). But silence is a strange thing. It is usually described in the negative — it is what there is when there is no noise, no sound, no articulation. Yet how to say what silence is itself, without recourse to what it isn't? And how to speak about the meaning that sometimes emerges from this thing that is not?

Nearly any one of De Boer's films or sound pieces or photographs seems to contain a kernel of every other piece. The workings of memory, the significance of what is absent, the way in which what one is not given to see or hear can portray a person: these are some of her persistent concerns. Thus de Boer's work, so engaged with portraying others, is undeniably also a portrait of the artist. And this, even as de Boer appears so little herself — she cuts out her own voice

and most references to her from the filmed interviews she makes, her presence remains outside the frame. Ici aussi, there is a kind of silence that matters

Manon de Boer

Resonating Surfaces, 2005, 38', color, sound

Camera
Sébastien Koeppel
Editing
Manon de Boer
Concept soundtrack
George van Dam and Manon de Boer
Composition soundtrack
George van Dam
Sound-editing
George van Dam and Bastien Gilson
Final mix sound
Christian Cartier
Production

Manon de Boer / Blitz vzw

Co-production

Jon Met Proceele

Jan Mot, Brussels Transmedia – Hogeschool Sint-Lukas,

Brussels
Le Fresnoy, Studio national des arts con-

temporains, Tourcoing With the financial support of the Vlaams Audiovisueel Fonds (VAF) Thanks to Lhoas & Lhoas

What Happens in Halifax Stays in Halifax

Mario Garcia Torres

LOS ANGELES, SUMMER 2005 — "You bastard!" said Robert Barry. It was 1974. David Askevold and Barry coincided at the then gallery owner Jack Wendler's house in London. Five years had passed since they where in touch for the last time. Askevold explained to him that he had bugged with a tape recorder a conversation that was supposed to be kept secret, and which was to become Barry's piece.

Barry had faxed the instructions for the piece, probably in late September 1969, to Askevold who was then teaching in Halifax so that the *Project Class* students could realize the work. The fax clearly stated that the students would gather and agree on an idea, which was to become the work: "The piece will remain in existence as long as the idea remains in the confines of the group". Nor the instructor, nor the artist should know about it. Apparently that is not the way things happened.

When is one to consider that a secret was revealed? Is a secret been given away when it's been "documented" in a tape? I have asked Askevold more than once if he actually heard the recordings but he wouldn't give an answer. He argues he had probably lost it. "At the time, everybody was going art documentary crazy anyway. (...) I wish I had the tape so that I now know what the secret was."

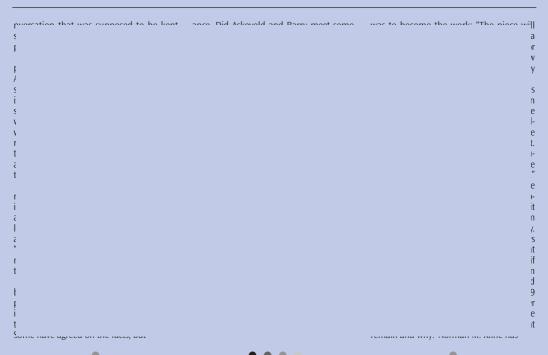
But, what was the actual secret? Is the bugging story part of the secret that was supposed to be kept? Or did it became part of it in the aftermath? Some of the students seem to have been cautious about what they say. Some have agreed on the facts, but others argue they can't remember them or that they weren't there. Sometimes I wonder if what was discussed in the project house in Halifax was of real importance. Did Askevold and Barry meet sometime between 1969 and 1974 and won't say so? Is there any other secret floating around these days? Maybe the real question is: What are the stories that remain and why? Norman M. Kline has stat-

ed that "Historical documents survive because they where not important enough to destroy at the time. They are what was not consumed by the rhythm of events".

For several months I have been tracking down the students that where enrolled in David Askevold's *Project Class* during the Fall of 1969 at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. They made their lives, some around and some away from the arts.

Memory can be blurry after 35 years, and all the more so if one hasn't given a thought to a specific fact, as more than one student have mentioned. For Konrad Wendt truth is what at least two persons agree on. But is it necessary to look for the truth? Sometimes the search for it might be more revealing, no matter the results. It is interesting to see how much we could go around an idea that, as suggested, might not be worth discovering.

Today, I still don't know what the secret was, and some of the students have stated that, even if they remember being there, do not recall the exact conversation they had





HALIFAX. Project Class house, back view. Photo David Askevold, 2005.

that day. Maybe they did release the secret, but just forgot about it. Probably the real legacy of these so-called conceptual art initiatives lays in the survival of these details in the artistic imaginary.

During the fall of 1969 several instruction works submitted by artist where realized by the students. When one gathers the documents that where generated around the

bugging story part or the secret that was sup-

time, it is possible to spot the same people in several of the photographs that have spread out in books and archives. They where participants, constituted audiences and sometimes were even behind the camera as in Dan Graham's performances and video pieces. They where also the ones that decided that a work of Douglas Huebler was to end up as a fake school advertising in Artforum

magazine; and the place where the images of a Jan Dibbets' piece where to be taken. But, how is one supposed to read what these people had to say by engaging themselves in the realization of these works?

Barry was at the time probably more interested in the dematerialization of the work of art than in the actual content of the students' conversation. He was probably thinking in the long-term existence of something simultaneously as intangible and precise as a secret. For the students, this didn't seem to be the main preoccupation. For some of them, the piecewas about friendship and loyalty. This makes me wonder where exactly lays its significance; what exactly makes a work like this transcend it's historical boundaries?

When the students realized that their conversation had been bugged, they apparently got together again and agreed on a new idea. On his side, Barry has persisted in showing the piece. Some might say that since the secret was recorded the work was destroyed; some others that it actually never got to exist-although one could argue the same thing about a long list of works that were created in the same spirit.

We know about a few of other works that were submitted to Askevold's *Project Class*, whose existence and realization was only transmitted by oral or written communica-

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tion. Or, for that matter, by photographs that can't say much about what actually took place. The fact that these works might still exist in the artistic imaginary is probably enough to keep developing an intellectual thread. The gaps between historical facts can sometimes further the exploration for knowledge. In that sense, my quest for Barry's secret aims to spin the circulation of a specific chapter of recent art in order to find out what are the possible repercussions that conceptual art and its legacy might still have in our understandings of the artistic matter.

This research has raised several questions. In the first place wanted to find out if the secret was still one. At some point the query moved me to discover who killed Robert's secret, but suddenly it started to disappear to give space to less specific and more revealing questions. As a continuation, of this project a class reunion has been organized. It will be held in Halifax, during November 2005. The meeting will gather the people who remembered having been present for the execution of Barry's piece. The report of this event will follow if its nature, and its participants, allow me to do so.

Thanks to the people involved in the fall 1969 Project Class: the students Mary Lou Bowstein, Terrel Seltzer, Ron Saab, Ian Murray, and specially to Konrad Wendt, Al McNamara, Tim Zuck, Richards Jarden, and Jon Young for the help of this research. Special thanks also to David Askevold for his help and enthusiasm and, of course, to the initiator of it all, Robert Barry.

This project could not have been possible without the help and support of Peter Dykhuis, Christopher Youngs, Debra Campbell, Pan Wendt, Barbara Edwards, John Latour, Chantal Pontbriand, Luca Cerizza and Martha Wilson, as well as Magali Arriola, Sofia Hernandez Chong Cuy, Nate Harrison, Hugo M. Hopping and Jan Mot.

The work by Robert Barry, A Work Submitted to Projects Class, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Fall from 1969, was part of the exhibition Today is just a copy of yesterday at Jan Mot (February – April 2005).

(advertisement)

In Brief

Calcutta Art Research. In December Joachim Koester is the first artist to go to Calcutta under this new research and residency programme for artists, curators and theoreticians, created by Amsterdam-based artist Praneet Soi and Stockholm-based curator Anders Kreuger. The other participating artists in the inaugural 2005/2006 season are Miriam Bäckström, Carsten Höller, Aernout Mik, Marcel Odenbach and Willem de Rooij.

The new book on the work by **Pierre Bismuth**, with contributions by Michael Newman, Raimar Stange and Thierry Davila, will be lauched at the Flammarion bookshop, Centre Pompidou, Paris on November the 3rd at 18h.

On the 12th of October **Sven Augustijnen** published a supplement to the Flemish newspaper De Tijd, dedicated to the building of the European parliament in Brussels. It features amongst other articles, an interview with Etienne Davignon, one of Belgium's leading economical and political figures. The publication is part of the exhibition *Information/transformation* at Extra City, Antwerp.

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JONATHAN MONK
PRESENTS A
BOOK BY
DONALD BURGY
FROM 1973

EACH PAGE IN THIS SERIES
CONTAINS ONE OF A CHOICE OF
SEVERAL STATEMENTS WHICH
IDENTIFY THE PAGE IN ITS
CONTEXT. THE OBSERVER'S
CHOICE OF IDENTITY FOR EACH
PAGE, WETHER IDENTICAL TO
THE PARTICULAR STATEMENT OR
NOT, RE-IDENTIFIES THE
OBSERVER AND HIS CONTEXT.

Jan Mot
Rue Antoine Dansaertstraat 190
B - 1000 Brussels

The gallery will be closed from December 18 till January. The forthcoming exhibition will include recent works by **Deimantas Narkevicius** and **Joachim Koester**. The opening will be on January 18.

Agenda

Sven Augustijnen

Information/Transformation, EXtra City, 4/9-4/12 (cat)

Pierre Bismuth

Points de vue, Nancy, 7/5-31/12 (solo); Pierre Bismuth–Michel Gondry, The All Seeing Eye, Cosmic Galerie, Paris, 12/10-3/12 (solo); Mouvement, des deux côtés du Rhin, Museum Ludwig, Cologne, 15/10-12/2; Strictement confidentiel. A partir de la collection de Marc et Josée Gensollen, Centre d'Art Vassivière, 29/10 – 22/1; Pantone 192 i altri colori. Galleria Sonia Rosso, Torino, 12/11-22/1

Manon de Boer

Contour, Mechelen 2005, Stad in Vrouwenhanden, Mechelen (B), 17/9-20/12; Jan Mot, Frieze Art Fair, London, 21-24/10; Resonating Surfaces, Jan Mot, Brussels, 3/11-17/12 (solo)

Rineke Diikstra

Slow Art. Zeitgenössische Kunst aus den Niederlanden und Flandern, Museum Kunst Palast, Düsseldorf, 16/7-6/11; Sujeto, MUSAC, Leon (E), 10/9-4/12; Rineke Dijkstra, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, 4/11-6/2 (solo)

Honoré ¶'O

The Quest, Belgian Pavilion, Biennial Venice, 12/6-11/11 (solo); Clone Stone, A forbidden Barbecue Piece. A Fountain Project in the Anyang Resort River, Anyang Public Art Project 2005, Anyang, from 20/10

Dora Garcia

Le Tableau des Elements, MAC's, Grand Hornu, 28/8-18/12; Vibraciones, MUSAC, Leon (E), 10/9-4/12 (solo); Des messages, des instructions, des questions, Frac Bourgogne, Dijon, 1/10-26/11 (solo); Galeria Juana de Aizpuru, Frieze Art Fair, London, 21-24/10; Dora Garcia, Festival de Performance y Video, Museo Nacional Reina Sofia, Madrid, 1/12-1/2 (solo); Galeria Juana de Aizpuru, Miami Art Fair, 2-5/12

Mario Garcia Torres

Anima-Dis/Appearance, Fri-Art, Fribourg, 17/9-6/11; Black Market Worlds. The 9th Baltic Triennial of International Art, CAC, Vilnius, 23/9-20/11 (cat.); Angelo, Mail, Deconsecrated Church of San Romano, Rome, 18/10-25/10 (with artist publication); Jan Mot, Frieze Art Fair, London, 21-24/10

Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster

Tropicália: A Parallel Modernity in Brazil. 1967-72, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, 22/10-8/1

Douglas Gordon

Strictement confidentiel. A partir de la collection de Marc et Josée Gensollen, Centre d'Art Vassivière. 29/10-22/1

Joachim Koester

Danish Pavilion, Biennial Venice, 12/6-11/11 (cat.); Black Market Worlds. The 9th Baltic Triennial of International Art, CAC, Vilnius, 23/9-20/11; Highlights, The National Museum of Art, Copenhagen, till Dec; Morning of the Magicians, Greene/Naftali Gallery, New-York, 18/11-7/2 (solo)

Deimantas Narkevicius

We are the Artists, International Biennial of Contemporary Art, National Gallery, Prague, 14/6-9/11; Black Market Worlds. The 9th Baltic Triennial of International Art, CAC, Vilnius, 23/10-20/11; Once in the XX Century, Akademie der Kunste, Berlin, 4/11-15/1 (solo); Soft Target. War as a Daily, First Hand Reality Exhibition Concerning War, BAK, Utrecht, 6/11-18/12

Tino Sehgal

German Pavilion, Venice Biennial, 12/6-11/11 (with T. Scheibitz); Yokohama Triennale, Yokohama, 28/9-18/12; Strictement confidentiel. A partir de la collection de Marc et Josée Gensollen, Centre d'Art Vassivière, 29/10-22/1; Johnen Galerie, Berlin, from 26/11 (solo)

Ian Wilson

Strictement confidentiel. A partir de la collection de Marc et Josée Gensollen, Centre d'Art Vassivière, from 29/10-

Other artists of the gallery: **Sharon Lockhart**



New Publications

Dora Garcia

Raimundas Malasauskas, *Todas Las Historias*, Reina Sofia, Madrid (cat.) (1.000 pages)

Closed

The gallery will be closed from 18/12 till 17/1

Colophon

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(advertisement)

JAN MOT

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donderdag-vrijdag-zaterdag 14-18.30 u jeudi-vendredi-samedi 14-18.30 h en op afspraak / et sur rendez-vous

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